

Communicable Diseases Update: Influenza Update: Surveillance monitoring for influenza positive lab results and influenza-like illness (ILI) reporting through sentinel physician providers has shown that ILI activity remains low thus far in Virginia. As of the week ending on December 17th, and based upon the data provided by participating sentinel providers, the Virginia Department of Health reported “Sporadic” ILI activity. “Sporadic” activity is defined as the presence of influenza laboratory cases confirmed by the state laboratory, but no outbreaks or increases in ILI detected in the five regions of the state in the prior reporting week. Since the beginning of the influenza season, the state laboratory has reported two confirmed cases of influenza A/H3 by DFA, RT/PCR and/or culture testing. Updated influenza reports and a color coded U.S. map illustrating ILI morbidity levels by state is provided on a weekly basis at the CDC web site at www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/fluactivity.htm.

Henrico Disease Morbidity Report: In the upcoming weeks a monthly updated disease morbidity report will be made available on the Henrico County Health Department (HCHD) web site. In the report, a year-to-date tally of selected reportable diseases and conditions will be maintained, along with a comparison to the previous year’s morbidity and a five year average. The report will include data from year 2002 to the present. The report will be accessible by clicking on the link **“Information for Healthcare Providers.”**

A review of the previous two years of reportable disease data revealed several diseases with significant variations in morbidity (see graph). From 2004 to 2005, varicella and giardiasis morbidity both increased by over two-hundred percent in Henrico County. In 2005, an upswing in varicella reports was primarily generated by school health care providers. Many of the reported cases involved instances of “breakthrough” varicella. In addition, a varicella outbreak at a middle school represented fifty percent of the year-to-date cases in 2005. Increases in giardiasis cases reported in 2005 are attributable to the

refugee population entering Henrico County (all are screened for parasitic diseases upon entry). Finally, a forty-three percent decrease in acute hepatitis B morbidity has been observed thus far when comparing 2005 to 2004 data. This trend closely matches a fifty-four percent decrease in acute hepatitis B at the state level over the same timeframe.

Tuberculosis: HCHD encourages primary care providers to practice targeted tuberculin testing and to treat all cases of latent TB infection following nationally accepted guidelines. Recently a **“Guide for Primary Health Care Providers: Targeted Tuberculin Testing and Treatment of Latent Tuberculosis Infection”** was released as a resource to front line practitioners. See: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchstp/tb/pubs/LTBI/pdf/TargetedLTBI05.pdf>

C. difficile update: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently issued a report in MMWR identifying the emergence of virulent strains of C. difficile. In addition to the virulence of the organism, there is also concern that previously considered “low-risk” populations are being affected, potentially requiring a higher index of suspicion for C. difficile in these persons. See MMWR at: http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5447a1.htm?s_cid=mm5447a1_e

Emergency Preparedness Update: Medical Reserve Corps (MRC): HCHD is pleased to announce the hiring of our MRC Coordinator, Ms. Paula Williams. The Medical Reserve Corps concept is based on the need to identify volunteers before a large scale emergency in an effort to ensure they are organized, trained, credentialed and ready to respond to public health emergencies. MRC volunteers may be called upon to dispense medications and vaccinations, treat evacuees living in emergency shelters, or assist in many other ways. With Ms. Williams’ arrival, HCHD is announcing the creation of the Henrico MRC, a chapter of the Virginia MRC. Letters are being mailed on behalf of VDH to Henrico resident health professionals who have previously indicated a willingness to assist during a time of a public health emergency. We also request your assistance to identify non health professionals to assist in these efforts. To become an MRC volunteer, please visit our website at <http://www.co.henrico.va.us/health/mrc.htm> and click on the link provided.

Prevention updates: Save the Date! *Preventing Colorectal Cancer in Virginia: A Dialogue for Action* will take place Wednesday April 26, 2006 at the Boar’s Head Inn, Charlottesville, Virginia. The CME program is planned specifically for Virginia providers with the goal of improving prevention and early detection of colorectal cancer in Virginia through education and partnerships. For more information contact Theresa Teekah at 804-864-7879 or Theresa.teekah@vdh.virginia.gov

